

Durham Research Online

Deposited in DRO:

01 April 2016

Version of attached file:

Presentation

Peer-review status of attached file:

Not peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Gorard, S. (2016) 'Does the use of contextual data help or hinder widening participation?', Researching the Micro and Local in Widening Participation Practice: Seminar 2: From the national to the local: the view from a city. Sheffield, UK, 24 February 2016.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.srhe.ac.uk/events/details.asp?eid=201>

Publisher's copyright statement:

Additional information:

Event date: Wednesday, 24 February 2016

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

Does the use of contextual data help or hinder widening participation?

Stephen Gorard
Durham University
s.a.c.gorard@durham.ac.uk



The wrong time to do this talk?

Scottish Funding Council - Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland

ESRC ES/N01166X/1 - Evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions

ESRC ES/N012046/1 - The kinds of poverty and their impact on student progress

Red herrings and real problems. Some reflections on the evaluation of Aimhigher

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/aim_higher/Aspire-Reflections_on_evaluation_of_Aimhigher.doc

In an influential review of Widening Participation (WP) research written for the HEFCE and published in July 2006, Gorard *et al* (2006) have **harshly** criticised the evaluation of WP initiatives. In their view, to date no convincing evidence of impact has been produced on pre-entry interventions for school pupils and partnership-based interventions, such as Aimhigher.

Gorard *et al*'s criticisms were addressed by the HEFCE in another review of WP research published later in the same year, in November 2006, and based on a survey of the evidence collected by the HEIs. It reasserted the value [of Aimhigher and other WP initiatives] as a monitoring and evaluating device and emphasised that, to date, **attitudes of learners and teachers have been consistently and overwhelmingly positive**. HEFCE feels satisfied that convincing and precise evidence has been produced on attainment by the national evaluation carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), and, to a lesser extent, on HE participation by the NFER and the HEIs. For example, it has been found that participating in Aimhigher activities was associated with '[a]n average improvement of 2.5 points in GCSE total point scores' and a '3.9 percentage point increase in Year 11 pupils intending to progress to HE' (HEFCE 2006: 23). Moreover, '[i]f the 'evidence bar' is set too high', the HEFCE (2006: 6-7) pointed out, 'we run the risk of discouraging any attempt to estimate the effectiveness of the interventions'. **There seems no scope for setting up a social science experiment in which the experiences of a wp group is compared with a control group.**

Comparison of HE applicants and heads of households by occupational class, UK

	2002 entry to UG HE	Census 2001
Higher managerial	18	10
Lower managerial	25	17
Intermediate	13	6
Small employers	6	7
Lower supervisory	4	8
Semi-routine	11	7
Routine	5	7
Unknown	19	38

Sources: HESA and National Statistics – <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>

Note: Unknown includes never worked, long-term unemployed, unknown or invalid response

The ecological fallacy – a reminder

- Robinson (1950) computed the illiteracy rate and the proportion of the population born outside the US for each state, from the 1930 census
 - Strong correlation (0.53) between literacy and immigration
 - But immigrants were, on average, less literate than US-born citizens (correlation -0.12)
-
- More recently, George W Bush won the 15 poorest US states in 2004
 - John Kerry won 9 of the 11 wealthiest states
 - But 62% of voters with incomes over \$200k voted Bush compared to only 36% with incomes less than \$15k
-
- Cannot conclude anything safely about individuals from area/population data
 - Much much less safe than using individual data

Percentage of pupils in England attaining each qualification threshold, by FSM status, 2007

	Not FSM eligible	FSM eligible	Missing FSM code (maintained)
Percentage of national total	76%	13%	4%
Percentage attaining 5+ GCSE or equivalents A*-C – Level 2	63	36	14
Percentage attaining Level 2 with GCSE English and Maths	49	21	7

Source: National Pupil Database 2007

Source: Gorard, S. (2012) Who is eligible for free school meals?: Characterising FSM as a measure of disadvantage in England, *British Educational Research Journal*, 38, 6, 1003-1017

Percentage of FSM groups with specified characteristics, England, KS4, 2013

FSM group	Any SEN	SEN statement	EAL
Never FSM	14.5	1.5	10
Not FSM now	25.5	2.4	17
FSM now	32	3.9	20.2

Attainment of FSM groups, England, KS4, 2013

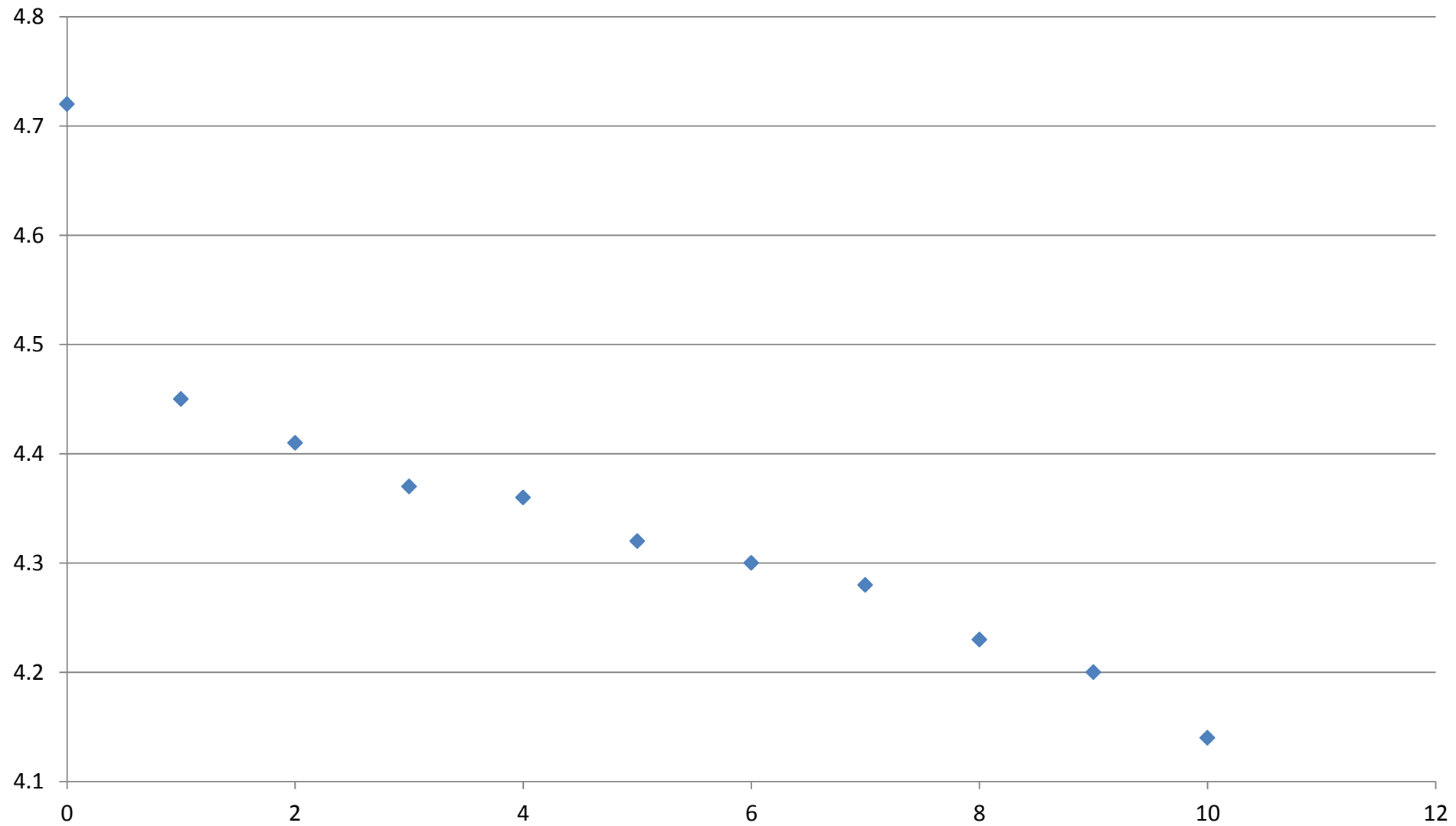
FSM group	Mean GCSE points score	Standard deviation of mean	Percentage gaining Level 2 with English and maths
Never FSM	42.02	7.40	70
Not FSM now	37.75	8.19	48.6
FSM now	36.67	8.69	42.2

Percentage of each FSM group in Middlesbrough, and Kensington and Chelsea

FSM group	Middlesbrough	Kensington and Chelsea
Never FSM	53.38	53.43
Not FSM now	13.52	27.34
FSM now	33.09	19.22

Source: Gorard, S. (2016) A cautionary note on measuring the pupil premium attainment gap in England, *British Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Sciences*, 21, 2

KS2 maths fine points and years FSM



Source: New analysis from NPD

Selected relevant references

- Gorard, S. (2015) Helping August's child, *New Scientist*, 17 October 2015, pp.8-9
- Gorard, S. (2016) Does the use of contextual admissions help universities to widen participation?, *Research Professional*, 17/1/16
- Boliver, V., Gorard, S. and Siddiqui, N. (2015) Does the use of contextual indicators make UK HE admissions fairer?, *Education Sciences*, 5, 4, <http://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/5/4/306>
- Gorard, S. (2013) The limitations of widening participation, *Adults Learning*, 25, pp.20-21
- Gorard, S. and See, BH. (2013) *Overcoming disadvantage in education*, London: Routledge
- See, BH., Torgerson, C. and Gorard, S. (2012) Promoting post-16 participation of ethnic minority students from disadvantaged backgrounds, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17, 4, 409-422
- Smith, E. and Gorard, S. (2011) Is there a shortage of scientists? A re-analysis of supply for the UK, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 59, 2, 159-177
- See, BH, Torgerson, C., Ainsworth, H., Gorard, S., Low, G. and Wright, K. (2011) The factors that promote high post-16 participation of some ethnic minority groups in England, *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, 16, 1, 85-100
- Gorard, S. (2010) Serious doubts about school effectiveness, *British Educational Research Journal*, 36, 5, 735-766
- Gorard, S. (2010) School experience as a potential determinant of post-compulsory participation, *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 23, 1, 3-17
- Gorard, S. (2010) Investing in proper research would save money on ineffective solutions, *Adult Learning*, 21, 10, 19-20
- Gorard, S. (2008) Who is missing from higher education?, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38, 3, 421-437
- Gorard, S., with Adnett, N., May, H., Slack, K., Smith, E. and Thomas, L. (2007) *Overcoming barriers to HE*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books
- Selwyn, N., Gorard, S. and Furlong, J. (2006) *Adult learning in the digital age*, London: RoutledgeFalmer